

Lena Neri

Northwestern Connecticut Community College

Liberal Arts and Sciences

Sophomore

Good evening members of the appropriations committee, my name is Lena Neri and I am a second-year student at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. I will be graduating this May with an associate degree in Liberal arts and sciences. I plan to transfer to a four-year institution this fall and obtain a bachelor's degree in Political Science and then eventually go on to law school. The funding that is provided to community colleges is important in aiding the colleges in making these opportunities available to students. Many people do not realize how much community colleges support their students. Everyone always looks down on community college, I even had someone tell me in high school that community college is like going to the thirteenth grade, however Northwestern has shown me how wrong everyone was.

Since enrolling in Northwestern, I have obtained an immense number of amazing opportunities. I am involved in a program at Northwestern called Team Success Scholars, which is a cohort-based scholarship program to help college students succeed. The program has opened many doors for me. I have obtained multiple certifications, various internship opportunities, as well as many helpful skills. I have held a position as an education intern at the American Mural Project in Winsted, and I am also currently an intern her for the Legislative Internship Program. Northwestern also offers a peer mentoring program in which first-year students can be paired with second year students who are willing to help them navigate their first year in college. It allows first year students assistance with their various needs, but it also allows them to meet new

people and build friendships. Northwestern also offers many clubs that allow students to come together and spend time discussing things they are passionate about. There are also many volunteering opportunities both in the community and on campus. The campus has its own food pantry for the students who need it as well as a garden that will be used to provide the local community with fresh produce. Not only are these programs offered but all the professors and staff do their best to help us students succeed.

One thing that helps many students in attending college is the PACT funding that has been supplied for the past two years. When applying for college in my senior year of high school I knew I wanted to graduate from college with as little debt as possible. Upon narrowing down my choices of colleges I eventually decided that community college would be the right path for me because I had no idea what I wanted to major in. I know the PACT funding that is being supplied has not only helped myself but also many other students. I attended Waterbury Public Schools prior to graduating high school and coming from these magnet schools there are many students from diverse backgrounds. I know this funding is extremely appreciated by students who come from lower income homes but still want to pursue a degree beyond high school.

I appreciate you taking the time to listen to me speak about my experiences at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. Thank you.